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ISRO TO GROW CROPS IN SPACE ON PSLV-C60 SPADEX MISSION

24 experiments include 10 from pvt sector

Of the 24 payloads, 14 will be from various ISRO labs and 10 from private universities and start-ups. In one of the experiments, ISRO will grow eight cowpea seeds from seed germination and plant sustenance until the two-leaf stage in a closed-box environment with thermal controls. Amity University, Mumbai, plans to study the growth of spinach in space

PSLV-C60 SPADEX, THE FOURTH POEM MISSION, IS EXPECTED TO BE LAUNCHED LATER THIS MONTH

The PSLV Orbital Experiment Module (POEM-4) will carry 24 experimental payloads to demonstrate various technologies in space

SOURCE: ISRO

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'Atrocities in the name of dharma due to ignorance'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

DAYS after expressing concern over the resurgence of temple-mosque disputes threatening to disrupt communal harmony, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said that all acts of persecution and atrocities committed in the name of dharma (religion) were due to lack of true comprehension of dharma.

Speaking at an event in Maharashtra's Amravati, he said improper and incomplete understanding of dharma leads to Adharma. "Dharma has always existed, governing the workings of the world, which is why it is called 'Sanatan' (eternal). The practice of dharma itself ensures its protection. The various reformative sects in our dharma played a crucial role and these sects are real wealth of dharma," he said.

He said no religion teaches to divide people, but rather they impart the wisdom of uniting people. "Unity is eternal. The whole universe is one. Practising non-violence protects the Dharma. If we really and properly understand the Dharma, then there will be tranquillity, equality, unity and prosperity," he said.

He said while even illiterates can easily understand dharma, it is often the educated lot, who are bloated with self-pride of their knowledge, who fail to comprehend it.

India, Kuwait now strategic partners

Key defence pact signed; Modi holds extensive talks with the Emir, invites him to visit India

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

INDIA and Kuwait on Sunday decided to elevate their bilateral relationship to a 'strategic partnership', under which both countries will explore ways to enhance cooperation in several sectors including education, information technology, pharmaceuticals, fintech, infrastructure, and security.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived in the Gulf nation on Saturday for a two-day visit, held extensive talks with Kuwait's top leaders, including Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and signed a number of pacts.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence will provide for cooperation in the areas of defence industries, supply of defence equipment, training, exchange of experts and joint exercises, and collaboration in research and development. The other MoUs cover sports, culture, and solar energy, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Modi's meeting with the Emir was at the iconic Bayan Palace. During the interaction, Modi invited the Emir to visit India. Modi also expressed his gratitude to the Emir for ensuring the wellbeing of over one million Indians in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti leader, in turn, acknowledged the vital contributions of the Indian community to Kuwait's development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred with 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' by Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al Sabah, in Kuwait on Sunday | PTI

The PM said the talks covered ways to deepen economic and cultural linkages between India and Kuwait, adding: "We are optimistic about the India-Kuwait Strategic Partnership scaling new heights of success in the times to come."

Modi also held wide-ranging talks with Crown Prince Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Kuwaiti Prime Minister Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In their delegation-level talks, the two prime ministers discussed a roadmap to strengthen the partnership in diverse areas including trade, investment, energy, defence, security, health, education, technology and people-to-people ties, the MEA said.

Modi is the first Indian prime minister to visit Kuwait in 43 years after Indira Gandhi visited the country in 1981.

59,772 govt teacher posts vacant in K'taka

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

A staggering 59,772 posts of teachers remain vacant in government schools in Karnataka. Of these, 50,067 posts are vacant in primary schools and 9,705 in high schools. Also, 6,158 schools are managing with just one teacher.

Educationists argue that the government is eroding educational standards at all levels, from primary to high school, due to widespread teacher shortage and inadequate facilities that fail to attract even teachers.

Experts suggest that Karnataka should follow Kerala's example, where Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated over five years to enhance school models for holistic educational development. They argue that shortage of teachers is a clear violation of the Right to Education, which mandates one teacher for every 30 students in primary schools, and one for every 35 students in higher primary schools.

Educationist Niranjanaradhya VP argued, "With 50,067 primary teacher positions vacant and 34,807 more retiring by 2028-29, how can we maintain quality education?" He stressed that without immediate action, the education system will face an 80,000-strong vacancy backlog, crippling schools across the state.

To tackle shortage, the department has turned to 45,000 guest teachers, with about 35,000 of them working at the primary level alone. P7

EXPRESS READ

Nitish, Modi to lead NDA's poll fight in Bihar

New Delhi: Senior Bihar BJP leader and the state's deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Sunday said the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would contest the 2025 Bihar Legislative Assembly elections under the joint leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The NDA will seek the people's mandate again under CM Nitish Kumar and PM Narendra Modi's leadership," Choudhary said | P9

Actor Allu Arjun's residence vandalised

Hyderabad: A group of persons, claiming to be members of Osmania University Joint Action Committee, on Sunday vandalised flower pots and other things at the residence of Telugu actor Allu Arjun here, demanding justice to the woman who died in *Pushpa-2* screening stampede in Hyderabad recently. They raised slogans against the movie actor and demanded financial assistance of Rs 1 crore for the victim's family | P7

2-year 'probation' for new drivers in Kerala soon

KRISHNA KUMAR K E & MANISHA V C S @ Kochi

STARTING next year, it won't be all smooth sailing for those receiving their driver's licence in Kerala. The state's Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) is set to introduce—maybe as early as April—a 'two-year' probation period for fresh licence holders as it looks to cut down on road accidents. During the period, the riders/drivers will get negative points if they get caught for driving-related offences. Get caught multiple times, and they will have to start the entire process all over again.

The points-based system is being introduced on the basis of a recent in-house study, which said 70% of road accidents in the state take place during the first three years of a person getting their driver's licence. The move is inspired by a similar practice in the UK.

"The probation system is part of a series of sweeping changes that will be introduced in the next few months to cut the rise in accidents. New licence holders will be assessed through a points-based system," Transport Commissioner Nagaraju Chakilam IPS told this newspaper.

For instance, a fresh licence holder will be awarded two negative points (-2) if they are caught for a traffic offence, say jumping the signal or failing to put on a seat belt. "Their licence will be revoked when they accumulate six negative points," Nagaraju said. The licencees will get six points upon completing a year without any accidents or committing any traffic offence. Once they accumulate 12 points, they will get their licence.

In the case of learner's licence, new licencees will have to label their vehicles 'P-1' and 'P-2' for the first and second years of probation.

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